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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ISLAMABAD 000552

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [PK](#)
SUBJECT: WHAT'S NEXT?

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, for reasons 1.4 (b)(d)

11. (C) Summary. Absent a terrorist attack or what we believe is unlikely Army intervention, the lawyers' "long march" will end with both sides' Eligibility

13. (C) Zardari has agreed to seek a review of the Supreme Court's decision to disqualify Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif from public office. The

14. (C) The Court could again rule that both Sharifs are ineligible, could clear them both for public office, or could issue a split judgment. There have been several suggestions on how to address Nawaz's predicament. He could appeal his original conviction, executed under the Musharraf's Rule

15. (C) Zardari and many Pakistan People's Party (PPP) members claim they were surprised the Court ruled against Shahbaz, indicating this was a weak turn of events

16. (C) There are several opinions on the subject, but post's legal sources (and President Zardari's spokesman) confirm that simply filing a request for Supreme Court review will return a case to the status quo, pending a new court decision. Thus, filing ISLAMABAD 00000552 002 OF 003

temporarily restore Shahbaz as Chief Minister of Punjab and end governor's rule.

17. (C) However, in the wake of governor's rule, it is unclear if the PPP-Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) coalition in the Punjab can survive. For its part, the PML leadership distrusts both Zardari and Nawaz but has made more offers to join PPP than PML-N. PML's suggestion of a third Judiciary Issue

18. (C) During the February 2008 election campaign, Nawaz made common cause with the populist lawyers' movement seeking to restore the judiciary

19. (C) Particularly after being reinstated, Chaudhry became increasingly active on the bench, inserting the Court into issues ranging from the public perception (which continues to be fed by Zardari) to the issue of terrorism. The public perception is that Chaudhry was removed because the U.S. did not want "disappeared" terrorists released by the Court. This is completely untrue but has been a factor

110. (C) Before this latest controversy, the lawyers' movement was fizzling badly as a public facing 30% food and fuel inflation had more impact than the court's actions

111. (C) Zardari has told us repeatedly that he will not/not restore Chaudhry as Chief Justice. Although Nawaz publicly has said Chaudhry is a Winner and Loser

112. (C) From political commentators to Army leaders and the man on the street, the overwhelming view is that Zardari seriously overreacted to the court's decision ISLAMABAD 00000552 003 OF 003

The decision has expanded rifts within the PPP and between Zardari and his coalition partners. It reinforced Zardari's already dubious reputation

113. (C) After Zardari left him no other option, Nawaz had little to lose from moving forward to join the lawyers' march. Even a weak turn of events

114. (C) The big winner is Prime Minister Gilani, who has adroitly positioned himself (as both a PPP stalwart and friend to PML-N and PM) to survive any outcome PATTERSON